

The Status of the Claims

Claims 1-5 (Previously Cancelled)

6. (Original) A method to fabricate a semiconductor device, the method comprising:

- forming an uppermost metal interconnect on a semiconductor substrate;
- forming an oxide layer on the substrate and the uppermost metal interconnect;
- forming an aluminum layer on the oxide layer; and
- forming a stress-relief layer on the aluminum layer to reduce stress on the metal interconnect.

7. (Original) A method as defined in claim 6, wherein forming the stress-relief layer comprises:

- performing a plasma treatment on a surface of the aluminum layer to form an aluminum oxide layer; and
- annealing the aluminum oxide layer.

8. (Original) A method as defined in claim 7, wherein the plasma treatment uses at least one of N₂O gas and O₂ gas.

9. (Original) A method as defined in claim 7, wherein the annealing is performed at a temperature of 200 to 400..

10. (Original) A method as defined in claim 7, wherein the aluminum oxide layer is annealed in an atmosphere of inert gas.

11. (Original) A method as defined in claim 10, wherein the inert gas is at least one of Ar and He.

12. (Original) A method as defined in claim 8, wherein the aluminum oxide layer is annealed in an atmosphere of inert gas.

13. (Original) A method as defined in claim 7, wherein the aluminum oxide layer is annealed in an atmosphere of gas including at least one of N_2O , O_2 , N_2 , and H_2 .

14. (Original) A method as defined in claim 8, wherein the aluminum oxide layer is annealed in an atmosphere of gas including at least one of N_2O , O_2 , N_2 , and H_2 .

15. (Original) A method as defined in claim 6, wherein the semiconductor device is at least one of a multi-interconnect adapted device and a power device.